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BY

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Dwight Professor of Theology in Yale University

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BY

DOUGLAS CLYDE MACINTOSH, PH.D.

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TO

MY HONORED

TEACHER AND FRIEND

PROFESSOR GEORGE BURMAN FOSTER

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GOD IN A WORLD AT WAR

INTRODUCTION

THE great world-war has led a good many people seriously to raise for the first time the question as to whether they ought not to revise their inherited religious beliefs. It all depends upon what happen to have been their inherited beliefs. Nothing has happened during the war that has not, in principle, happened over and over again in the course of human history; there are no essentially new religious problems to be faced. But many who were putting off the troublesome duty of fundamental thinking until a more convenient season are now finding themselves forced, for their own peace of mind, to begin even at this late hour to do their own religious thinking and come to their own conclusions.

The religious questions most commonly raised by the war have been concerning divine providence in human affairs, the meaning of the presence of so much evil in the universe of a presumably good God, assurance as to a life after death, the religious status of the individual soldier with special reference to the hereafter, and the prospect for the future well-being of the human race. These are the questions that many in the homelands are raising; and the writer's contact with soldiers in the camp, on the field and in the hospital would lead him to

say that these are also in the main the very questions which interest and often perplex the minds of the men that make up our fighting forces. These, therefore, are the questions which demand our present attention, and we shall consider them under the following heads :—

I. God ;
II. God and History ;
III. God and Evil ;
IV. God and the Individual.

I

GOD

THE most fundamental of religious problems now as always is the problem as to the nature and existence of God.

There always has been in these modern days of transition from dogmatism to science a good deal of questioning and uncertainty as to the existence of God. But there is perhaps no more of this uncertainty at the present moment than there was before the outbreak of the war. Some who believed half-heartedly may have "lost their faith"; but some others who were in honest doubt are now able, through deepened experience and reflection, to make an equally honest confession of faith.

Uncertainty as to the existence of God is always due to one or the other, or both, of two causes. Sometimes it is because of a defective idea of God. Where the thought is incorrect, experience refutes instead of verifying. Sometimes the doubt is due to defective religious experience. However correct the idea of God, apart from religion it can be but problematical, a vague possibility. Moreover, each of these defects has a tendency to aggravate the other. Wrong ideas of God result in a defective religious experience, and the defective experience fails to correct wrong ideas, until any specially religious experience ceases and belief in God is given up.

The wrong ideas of God are naturally many. We shall refer to but two of them. One is the idea to which Mr. H. G. Wells in his recent works has been giving currency. It is the idea of " a finite God " who is our " great Brother and Leader," but who, so far from being the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, " does not care, and very likely does not know, how this tangle of existence came into being." But even if one could find reason to believe in the existence of such a Being, it is not easy to see how one could have perfect confidence in His sufficiency. As a God He would be good enough, perhaps ; but He would scarcely be great enough to be the Object of our absolute dependence.

Another unsatisfactory idea of God is that which insists upon regarding Him as the Cause, providentially, of the present war. Mysterious as it may seem to us, He is using, it is asserted, devilish means to realize His divine ends. But, remembering the iniquitous acts which plunged the world into this bloody conflict, we must hold any such God too unscrupulous to be adequate to the needs of religion. He might be great enough, but He would not be good enough to be the Object of worship and absolute dependence.

The true idea of God is derived from religious experience at its best. It is the idea not merely of a Reality upon which we are ultimately dependent. It is more specific than that. It is the idea of a Reality that is absolutely sufficient for the imperative religious needs of men—both great enough and good enough to be the satisfactory Object of absolute dependence and worship. What are the religious needs of men ? Reduced to its lowest terms, what man needs of God is preparedness of spirit to meet in the right way whatever he may have to meet, whether it be temptation, opportunity for ser-

vice, danger, pain, loss, disappointment, death, or whatever there may be after death. Such inner preparedness through religious dependence is virtual salvation. Actual salvation is its consummation: deliverance from all absolute evil, and steady development toward the true ideal. God, then, must be both great enough and good enough to be absolutely dependable for the making of this inner preparedness and actual deliverance possible, no matter what may happen in the world about us. "Good enough" can only mean perfection in holiness and perfection in love. No love is perfect that is not perfect in holiness, and no holiness is perfect that is not perfect in love. Both ideas are fulfilled in the idea of a God who, from the point of view of the moral and religious consciousness of a Jesus of Nazareth, is "the Father" and "perfect." "Great enough," moreover, as applied to God, must mean possessing power enough and wisdom enough, and being sufficiently accessible to man to make possible the divine bestowal and man's acquisition of full preparedness of spirit for any situation that may have to be faced and any duty that may have to be done. This means ability to "save to the uttermost" all who enter into the right religious relation, and to continue the triumphant progress of the spirit toward its true ideal in spite of all that can befall a person in this life, or in death, or in whatever there may be in any future state. God must be great enough to keep anything that can happen in nature or in history from making this inner preparedness and steady development at any moment impossible to any individual who enters into the right relation of self-adjustment to God.

There is a common notion of God which makes religious doubt practically inevitable for critical thought, and which ought to be corrected. It is the still too prevalent

conception of an immeasurably great but essentially man-like Person, who is wholly external to men—as external to men as individual men are to each other Now it is true that in religion we do need to make use of the analogy of human social relations, relations of persons to person ; but there is another analogy which is in some respects closer and more illuminating. This is that of the relation of the higher and more comprehensive self, the rational will with its moral character, to the lower, fragmentary "selves" of particular impulses, or tendencies to action. These component factors of the human life are so independent of the central rational will that they may even, within certain limits, act in opposition to that will ; and yet, on the other hand, the rational self has a way of influencing them from within, and when they do come into conformity with the central will, their action is at once the action of the subordinate centre of activity and the action of the rational will through that lower centre. For example, our breathing, which commonly takes place with little or no conscious direction, may, on occasion, be regulated by the rational will, in which case the act is at once an act of the subordinate centre and of the rational will through that lower centre. The relation of God to man may be thought of in similar fashion. God transcends man somewhat as the rational human will transcends the particular human impulses ; and yet God can act in and through man's activities, somewhat as man's will, or deliberate purpose, can make use of his impulses and act through them. There are different degrees both of the possible immanence of human will and character in organic process and of the possible immanence of the life of God in the soul of man.

This view of the relation of God to man may tend to remove intellectual difficulties in the way of religious

belief, but is not enough of itself to produce religious assurance. It is only in the actual experience of this inner preparedness for anything, this deliverance from all absolute evil through religious dependence, that one becomes adequately convinced of the existence of God as the Power in the universe that is able and ready thus to prepare and to deliver us. Somewhat as we become aware of the presence of physical objects in the complex of sense-qualities of color, sound, touch and the rest, or as we become aware of ourselves in the complex of inner experiences, or as we become aware of other persons in the complex of social experiences, so in the complex of religious experience at its best we become aware of "a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness" in and through us, according as we relate ourselves to that Power in a certain discoverable religious attitude. There are many arguments for the existence of God, but there is but one demonstration. It is not deductive, but empirical—the proof that is found in the right sort of religious experience.

II

GOD AND HISTORY

MOST urgent among the religious problems of the day is the question as to the relation of God to the events of current history.

As was to be expected, many erroneous notions are prevalent concerning divine providence and the present war. Some of these errors are owing to intellectual confusion; others, however, impress one as due to an almost wilful perversion of the impulses of religious faith.

In any case, most conspicuous among the erroneous doctrines of the day with reference to divine providence is that which has been voiced by the German Emperor ever since the beginning of the war. In speaking of the Teutonic triumph over disorganized Russia, for example, he is reported to have expressed himself as follows: "The complete victory fills me with gratitude. It permits us to live again one of these great moments in which we can reverently admire God's hand in history. What turn events have taken is by the disposition of God." One could scarcely be blamed for inferring that the Kaiser imagined, or affected to believe, that the Almighty had entered into a favored-nation treaty of some sort with Germany. But even this would seem to fall short of what has been claimed. We quote further from the same theological authority. "The year 1917 with its great

battles has proved," he has asserted, with almost incredible simple-mindedness, "that the German people has in the Lord of Creation above an unconditional and avowed ally on whom it can absolutely rely." And even so late as the end of September, 1918, the same authority was responsible for this statement: "Our enemies cannot and will not succeed. We are under divine protection."

By way of comment upon such statements, let us quote the words of one of the Kaiser's own subjects:—

> The appeals and praises to God go on without cessation. Not a telegram in which the Kaiser doesn't say, "God has helped," "may He continue to help," "He will still help," "the God of Christianity, the German God, the God of battles who does not forsake the righteous cause." What will he say if the war should be lost? Will he change his phrases, or will he speak of the superior strength of the enemy, of the treachery of friends, of mistakes of politicians or generals, of mustering new strength, of speedy revenge, or of wise submission to the force of circumstances? Will he and his myrmidons admit that they have been deceived in God, and have praised Him prematurely? Will they acknowledge the injustice of our cause, if God's verdict goes against us? Will they then see that there is no partisan God? Is this continual reference to God due in part to narrowness of outlook, or is it merely political wisdom? Does the real believer regard it as blasphemy or as inspiration? And what does the sceptic, the unbeliever, feel about it?—*Dr. Muehlon's Diary*, Entry for September 1, 1914.

The curious reversion to religious tribalism in the case of the German Emperor has not been without its parallel in the belief of his subjects. Assiduously taught, as they were, that they were fighting a justified, defensive war, and praying, as they have been, for victory over their enemies, their conviction came to be, pretty generally, what a German-American in the early days of the war expressed in these words: "If Germany doesn't win this war, there is no God." However, in view of what the world knows as to the causation and the conduct of this

war on the part of Germany, the only answer so preposterous a doctrine deserves is that given by Ex-President Taft: "Germany has mistaken the devil for God."

But the Germans are not the only ones who have been cherishing mistaken notions as to the providence of God in human affairs. We and our allies have rejected the idea of a partisan, or merely national God, and any notion of the "Lord of Creation" being our "unconditional ally." The morally perfect God is too just and impartial to have any favorites among the nations, whether Jewish, or German, or British, or American. Might does not make right, we know; and no more is might an infallible index to God's will. God is not necessarily "on the side of the heaviest battalions." On the contrary, the true God, as the God of righteousness, must be, we feel sure, on the side of right and justice, whichever side that may be. Being confident, therefore, of the justice of our cause, we feel that we have the best of reasons for believing that we are fighting on the side of God, as well as for the true well-being of humanity.

So far, good; but many among us proceed to put two and two together and find that they make five. If we are on the side of human rights and the will of God, and if God is sufficient for our religious needs, is it not clear that, from the beginning, we ought to have been absolutely certain of winning the war, whatever temporary reverses might have to be encountered? Moreover, especially since we did not omit to have our days of prayer for victory, have we not been entitled to sing,

> Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,
> And this be our motto, "In God is our trust"?

Indeed, so satisfied have many of us been with the logic of this position that multitudes of us would have agreed

with the sentiment expressed by a British-American in the early days of the war, "If Germany wins this war, there is no God."

But there are reasons for doubting the correctness of this view. Right makes God's will, surely enough; but has it been, or ought it to have been, certain from the beginning that the side whose cause was just would win the war, simply because it was the side of right and of God? Ultimately, we may be sure, right must prevail, for wrong is not the sort of thing that can permanently succeed; it contains within itself the germs of its own ultimate destruction. But nothing in history can be surer than that this ultimate judgment upon evil does not necessarily involve the defeat of all unjustified military undertakings. The side with the greater moral justification has not always won its battles, nor even its wars. It is not enough to have justice on our side; we must use our might on the side of right. Right has to be worked for, and sometimes it has to be fought for. That is the kind of world that—not unfortunately for our development, probably—we are living in. And the fighting is no sham battle. Its issue is not predetermined. It is being decided while the fighting is going on.

Moreover, with reference to prayer as a military factor, it is only fair to remember the many sincere and believing prayers for victory in the war offered by the religious on *both* sides. It is not intended to deny that religion of a certain sort is an important military factor; sincere and believing prayer for a cause that is regarded as sacred and just undoubtedly helps morale, both in the army and throughout the nation. But it is a factor which throughout the war has operated on both sides. Man has the capacity for misusing not only physical, but even spiritual forces. And on the other hand, when prayer

and religious faith encourage an easygoing attitude, and are thus made to some extent a substitute for effort, such prayer and faith cannot but prove a serious military hindrance, no matter how just the cause may be that they are designed to support. They may even conceivably make enough of a difference on the wrong side to lead to the defeat of righteousness.

These notions as to God's providence in war, which we have criticized as manifestly mistaken and dangerously misleading, are symptomatic of confused and muddy thinking on the whole subject of the providence of God in human history. How does God secure His adequate providential control of the course of history? One theory is that He has secured it by having absolutely predetermined from the beginning all events of nature and history, so that all process is the simple unfolding of what has been eternally decreed. There are the strongest ethical and religious reasons for refusing to accept this unproved and unprovable dogma. On the one hand it would mean that man's consciousness of free agency and moral responsibility would have to be regarded as quite illusory, since what has been decided and made inevitable before man's life began cannot have been originated by man himself. On the other hand this predestination doctrine would mean that God should be regarded as the real and responsible cause of all evil, including what we call human sin. No such God would be moral enough to be trustworthy or deserving of human adoration.

Another theory as to how God secures His adequate providential control of the course of events is that it is by various sorts of arbitrary or unconditioned interventions in external nature, as well as in human life, in order to realize the ends He may desire to accomplish from time to time. It has often been suggested, for instance, that

a miracle of this sort took place at the Marne, preventing the German entry into Paris. But this theory is open to the objection that it raises three unanswerable questions. In the first place, how can we be sure that such interventions have taken place, particularly in the external world? How do we suppose it will ever be established sufficiently for confident rational belief that only by special miracle were the German armies turned back from Paris in 1914? In the second place, if such special miraculous interventions do take place for the sake of preventing evil, why do they not take place oftener, especially in these times of unprecedented disaster to human life? A miracle like that of the Marne, such as would have turned the Turks back from the helpless Armenians, would have been much appreciated. But, for a third question, if such miracles were to take place as often as this theory of providence would seem to call for, what would become of the order of nature, and how could man learn what to expect, or how to adjust himself to his environment?

As against these theories of absolute predetermination and arbitrary intervention, we may point out that God secures His adequate providential control of the course of history in two principal ways, viz. by *enough* predetermination of events to give man a dependable universe to live in and learn from, and by *enough* intervention to admit of a response to man's need of the religious experience of salvation, that is, of being inwardly or spiritually prepared to meet in the right way and with triumphant spirit the very worst that the future may bring. The predetermined order of the laws of nature and mind exhibits the *general providence* of God. By means of this order, or in the light of consequences, God is teaching man both science and morality, that is, how

to adapt means to the realization of ends, and what ideals and principles of action must be employed if the most desirable results are to be obtained. The "intervention enough" of which we spoke—if indeed it is to be called intervention—or, in other words, the response of the divine Reality to the right religious attitude on the part of man, is an exhibition of the *special providence* of God. When one has found the right relation to God and gained access to the divine power for the inner life, one is virtually prepared for whatever can happen to him. But, as we have indicated, his preparedness is primarily inner, spiritual. He is in a position to meet danger with moral courage; to gain the victory over temptation; to make the most of opportunities for service; to endure hardship, pain and privation, as a good soldier, with patience and cheerfulness; to face death—his own or that of others—and whatever there may be after death, with faith and equanimity.

There are two possible ways, then, in which God may exercise His providence in the events of human history. There is His shorter and preferred method, and His longer and more roundabout method. If the individuals concerned come into the right relation to God, there is the best possible guarantee that they will be made ready for all there may be for them to do and to experience, and thus conditions will be most favorable for the speedy realization of the will of God. But if this shorter, preferred method cannot be employed, because men fail to rise to the occasion as they might if they would rightly relate themselves to God, the divine providence will still be exercised, although necessarily in the less desirable, more roundabout way. God will let man choose the wrong way through thoughtlessness or wilfulness, and then let him take the bitter consequences of failure, that he may

finally learn to guard against similar mistakes and faults in the future.

Let us now return to the more particular question of the relation of the providence of God to the great world-war. Before referring again to the topic with which we started, viz. the final outcome of the conflict, we may deal with some other aspects of the problem. In the light of what has been said of the two possible methods of divine providence, it may be denied that the war was providentially caused by God in order to curb other evils, such as softness and idleness, or the selfish pursuit of wealth and pleasure, or drunkenness and vice, or thoughtlessness and irreligion. It is true enough that in the face of war conditions some of these evils have been decreased and the martial qualities of self-sacrificing courage and fortitude have been stimulated. But it is notoriously true that the advent of war introduces a host of evils, in some cases necessarily, in others almost as inevitably. Drunkenness tends to increase greatly, unless stern measures are taken for its repression. Vice, with the resulting transmissible diseases, ordinarily becomes much more prevalent. Hatred, cruelty, and even the most fiendish brutality are given ample opportunity to develop, and in many instances they become relatively fixed attitudes and attributes of character. So far from the biologically fittest tending to survive, under modern war conditions these are the very ones who, for the most part and to the incalculable detriment of the future of the race, are killed off, even granting that of those who are "fit" enough to get to the front, the weakest are those who have the poorest chance of survival. And finally, when the stress of war conditions becomes acute, innumerable enterprises for social betterment are constrained to be given up, at least for the time being. In view, then, of all this, not to dwell upon the

unspeakable suffering, physical and mental, on the part not only of combatants, but of non-combatants as well, and considering the merely problematical nature of the good to which the crisis involved in a state of war may prove a stimulus, it must be regarded as incredible that a God good enough and wise enough to be worthy of absolute dependence and worship could have ordered so stupendous a catastrophe as a possible means of national or racial salvation. Neither is it reasonable to suppose that God has been prolonging the war, in order that some social evils, such as drunkenness, might be eradicated before victory was finally secured. Something like this might, perhaps, be the outcome, if such a war were greatly prolonged; but it could not be at all certain beforehand that any such improvement would be permanent enough to offset the evils involved in the continuation of the war. We can not suppose any one who was wise enough and good enough to be God would be so far below our best human standards as to will either the existence or the continuation of the war as a whole, with all its attendant evils, even in order that particular goods, of the kind referred to, might abound. Any God who might be thought of as doing so would be a false God; his condemnation would be just.

Understanding, then, that in so far as human hatred or selfishness or stupidity have been factors in leading to the war, it has been originated, not by the will or in the providence of God, but against His will and providence; understanding also that in so far as it has been prolonged by human inefficiency or stupidity, or by the efficiency of evil wills, or of the wills in the service of wrong, its continuation has not been in accordance with but in opposition to His will and providence, let us turn to the more positive aspect of the divine providence in connec-

tion with the war. It may be said, to begin with, that in so far as going into this war has been correctly judged by any party to it to be the necessary alternative to national perfidy, or ignoble servitude, or any other evil greater than those involved in passing through the ordeal of war, and in so far as the task has been accepted as a solemn duty and entered upon in brave and self-sacrificing spirit, the act of going to war is to be regarded as in accord with the will of God. Indeed, if we may regard the divine spirit as immanent where we find the divine qualities present in human life, we may go further and say that such righteous participation in the war is the work of God within the soul of man, fighting against the forces of evil. Moreover, in so far as the war has been prolonged by the fortitude of men of good intentions and their fidelity to a just cause, the war may similarly be said to have been prolonged in accord with the will and even by the work of God in and through the good will and work of men.

But of providence in relation to the war as a whole, it can only be said that man's evil choice has compelled God to use the long, roundabout method. It is the second best method, although the best possible under the circumstances. The sinful choices of men and nations were not, of course, divinely predetermined. What has been divinely predetermined, we may well believe, is the law-abiding order of nature and of individual and social mind, according to which the disasters and sufferings incidental to war are the inevitable consequences of certain forms of individual and corporate wrongdoing. In this roundabout way certain reforms may be providentially forced upon nations by a great war. The evil consequences of certain former evils tend to be more acutely felt under the strain and stress of severe and prolonged warfare. Let us suppose that in order to win such a war nations

may find it necessary to take drastic steps to eradicate drunkenness with its attendant evils, or even to prohibit the waste of food-stuffs and fuel involved in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages. Such a consequence would not mean that the war had been divinely caused in order to realize this end, but only that it was, and indeed always is, the divine will that man should learn the lessons of the law of consequences, which lessons are in some instances more readily learned in time of war.

But what God has been teaching most directly through the law of consequences in connection with the war is the necessity of correcting certain immoral international relations. He has been teaching the nations through bitter experience how imperative are international righteousness and some practicable and adequately democratic scheme of world-government.

In reverting to the topic of the outcome of the great conflict, the writer is constrained, in order to make his thought unmistakably clear, to quote words which he addressed to an American audience during that trying time in the spring of 1918 when our enemy's armies on the Western Front were rapidly plunging ahead, and when the latest reports of what had been accomplished by the United States during her first year of the war were anything but gratifying or reassuring. The state of affairs which called forth this particular form of utterance no longer exists, but it is the writer's conviction that the words he used were—and always will be—true of the situation which confronted the Western Allies during those critical days.

We must not close our eyes to the possibility that through our failure to do our part, God may be forced to take the long, sad, roundabout way of exercising His providence in connection with the end, as He had to in the beginning of the war. What we must

waken up to is this, that *in spite of the justice of our cause, in spite of its being the cause of humanity and in essential accord with the will of God, and in spite of our days of prayer and our optimistic religious faith,* GERMANY MAY WIN THIS WAR! If our consciousness of being right and our religious optimism make us so complacent that we shall fail to exert our utmost strength on behalf of our righteous cause, these may be the very factors that will turn the tide of war against us. We have resources enough for the winning of victory. If we fail it will be a moral failure. If we fail to rise to the moral demands of this great occasion, God may have to let us fail to win the war and then learn what we can from the bitter consequences of this failure. We and future generations may have to learn through tragic experience how imperative it is that right be not left to enforce itself, but that we devote our full might to the cause of right, and that before it is too late.

It is true that it seems not yet too late, however critical the situation, for the winning of victory for the cause of liberty and justice. But the surest way of providing for success would be for all who recognize the right so to surrender themselves to the will of God for self-sacrificing service, and so to depend upon the indwelling power of God for inner preparedness for whatever may have to be faced and whatever may have to be done, that their whole might may be made use of in this warfare for the right. Our primary need is *morale*—morale in the Government, morale in the shipyards, morale in the munitions factories, morale among all our people in their business and home life, as well as fighting spirit in our army and navy abroad. Enough religion of the right sort may make enough difference in morale to make all the difference between defeat and victory as the outcome of this war. And if in this way victory for the right should come as a result of religion, it would be not only a crowning example of the short and preferred method of divine providence; it would be, literally speaking, victory by the Grace of God.

In any case the situation for the Western Allies is such that neither faith without works nor works without faith can accomplish what waits to be done. There must be, if we would win, faith and works together.

Before leaving this topic of God and history, a word may be said on the question of what, on this interpretation of providence, we may expect to be the final outcome of this war for the future of the race. Will the result be more harm than good, or more good than harm? It is very

certain that the war will need to be the occasion of an immense amount of good to balance up to the race the evils involved in it from beginning to end. Much possible evil will be avoided if the immoral Prussian militaristic ideal is finally and permanently eradicated. Moreover, there is the probability that humanity will have learned, at least temporarily and as an intellectual conviction, the undesirability of war and of the conditions that make for war. But attention and moral effort will be necessary to retain this lesson with sufficient impressiveness, and to put it into effect, and the best power of thought will be needed to determine just how this putting it into effect may be most fully and lastingly secured. There seems real danger that the human race on earth will be permanently poorer and worse off, spiritually and socially, as well as biologically and economically, as a result of this nearest approach to racial suicide. Undoubtedly it will be so, if the nations fail to learn and to put into effect the lesson of the necessity of international righteousness and a just and efficient system of world-government.

It is perhaps possible for the race to learn enough from this period of strife and carnage for the resultant good to outbalance the total evil. But even then no one would have the right to credit the war with having been the means of greater good than *could* have been accomplished without it. All its moral evil at any rate will be regrettable forever. And the only possible way of guaranteeing beforehand greater good than evil as an outcome of the war, even in view of the victory of the cause of justice and liberty, will be for individuals and groups so to relate themselves to truth, to right and to God, that flagrantly immoral international relations will become practically impossible. The only safety of the race lies in an essentially Christian international morality, and the only adequate guarantee

of this is an essentially Christian personal religion. The only failure of essential Christianity of which the war may fairly be regarded as evidence was its failure to be given an adequate trial; which means, of course, not a failure of Christianity as an ethical or as a religious system, but a failure of the human will to be adequately Christian. So-called "Christians" failed, but not the principles of Christianity.

III

GOD AND EVIL

THE war has given new weight to the problem of evil. The most insistent problem with regard to evil always is (or ought to be) the practical problem—how to get rid of it. But the more theoretical problem of evil—the problem as to how, in the presence of so much evil in the world, it is not unreasonable to believe in the existence of a God both great enough and good enough for the religious needs of man—this, too, becomes in the end a practical problem. The vitality of the religion of thoughtful people depends to a considerable extent upon their finding a satisfactory answer to such questions as this.

Among opinions to be rejected should be included, on the one hand, that exaggerated optimism which would maintain that " all's well with the world," that the world we live in is the best possible world, that " whatever is, is right," and on the other hand, the too pessimistic view that even in its general constitution the world we live in is not the best possible kind of world in which to have man begin his development. In distinction from both of these positions, the thesis we would undertake to defend is this : that while this world is far from being as yet the best possible world, nevertheless in view of its general constitution it may be regarded as the best possible *kind* of world in which to have man begin his development,

and that the evils which exist in the world furnish no good reason for abandoning belief in a God who is both good enough and great enough to meet every real religious need.

The best possible kind of world must be a world of law and order. This seems a pretty obvious assertion with which to begin. The physical world, as a world of law, gives all living beings a steady and dependable platform upon which to stand. To its uniform processes the organism may adjust its activities and learn to make habitual the most favorable adjustments. Indeed, if the world were not thus essentially dependable in its processes, it would seem that no real or permanent progress in the constitution or activities of organic beings could be looked for. No habit could be any better than any other habit; no character any better than any other character.

But the ruthless processes of natural law, admitting of no exceptions in order to spare the individual organism or any other object, inevitably tend and not infrequently lead to the injury or even to the violent and premature death of organic beings, human as well as other, and to the destruction of objects which have value for living beings. The lives of men and animals and the existence of objects of value are exposed from time to time to various "accidents," in all of which the impartial, law-abiding processes of nature are involved. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tempests, floods, fires, extremes of heat and cold, diseases of all sorts—these and other disaster-bringing events are incidental to the world we live in being a world of undeviating natural law.

Now it is all very well to enlarge upon the desirability of a world of law and order, but would it not be well if there were a way of intervening in this world of mechanical and chemical law, for the guarding of life and objects of

value from the injury and destruction that would otherwise befall them? And in order that this intervention should not break up the orderliness and dependableness of the world, and thus lead to confusion and stagnation, might it not be well that it should be not a process of suspending the laws of the physical world, but one of introducing new factors whose processes would themselves be according to their own laws and uniformities?

This may seem a good deal to ask—an intervention in a world of law, which would yet be no breach of law, but itself the exemplification of law, a sort of law-abiding miracle—but as a matter of fact it is just this which we find in existence in the world in which we live. In the processes of sensation we see this law-abiding miracle for the protection of the living organism and its possessions. Sight, hearing, sensations of taste, smell, touch, heat and cold, pleasant sensations and sensations of pain—these are the desired protective processes made, as it were, to order. Miraculous as they are from the standpoint of the merely mechanical, chemical and physiological, they are nevertheless themselves perfectly orderly and law-abiding, being definitely conditioned upon certain events in the nervous system, and exhibiting certain inner uniformities (psychical laws) of their own.

The serviceable function of sense-processes is well known. Sight, hearing and the sense of smell not only enable men and animals to avoid many enemies and threatening dangers; they also make it possible for them to secure their own food and the other necessities of life. Sensations of sight, smell and taste help to identify wholesome food-substances. Feelings of pleasure are associated with the activities involved in satisfying appetites which in the main operate to preserve the life of the individual or of the race. And one of the most indispensable of

sensations is the sensation of pain in its various forms and combinations. Where quick or decisive reversal of conditions is necessary, if injury to the organism is to be avoided, a special sort of sensation, sharply stimulating to change, is called for; and this is what we have, as a blessing in disguise, in the sensation of pain. If the burning of the flesh, exposure to extreme heat or cold, bodily exhaustion, hunger, thirst, wounds and conditions of acute disease were not normally accompanied by sensations of pain, all the "higher" and more complicated forms of animal life would soon be killed off by the ruthless operation of natural forces. Indeed, in the light of the now well-established evolutionary view of the origin of species, the human species included, we can say that a world without any pain in it would have been a world in which man could never have appeared; his animal ancestors would have been killed off long before the biological conditions for the appearance of the human species had been reached.

It seems clear, then, that a world in which there occur, in a law-abiding way, sensations of many sorts, including sensations of pain, is a much more desirable kind of world, from the standpoint of the well-being of physical life and all that depends upon it, than any world of physical law without such processes of sensation. But it may be objected that in this law-abiding character of sensation there is involved a good deal of pain which is not of immediate use to physical life. For example, just because, when certain bodily conditions exist, certain sensations appear, there is often much pain in connection with incurable disease, and even in curable cases pain may continue for some time after the appropriate remedy has been applied. Moreover, biologically necessary operations are often accompanied by intense suffering. Of course, it is

to be recognized that pain which is not directly and immediately valuable for the life of the body may still prove, in the case of man, valuable for moral discipline. Theoretically, it would seem, this ought to be true of all human pain ultimately. Besides, most systems of education and reform provide for the deliberate addition of pain of one sort or another, for the sake of correction and discipline. Thus much pain that is not *immediately and directly* useful for the life of the body may come to have biological value *ultimately and indirectly*. And yet, when all has been said, it would seem that there is, by virtue of the law-abiding processes of sensation, a good deal of suffering, human and animal, which, it is not unreasonable to suppose, the world would be much better without. While it is not easy to prove that any human suffering will be absolutely useless, there can be little doubt that much of it is needless.

Would it not be well, then, it may be asked, if there were a way of intervening so as to regulate the life of sense, and especially sensations of pain, in order that needless pain might be reduced to a minimum? It would be desirable, however, on general principles, that any such intervening process should not involve a suspension of the laws of sensation, and that it should proceed according to laws of its own. This amounts to a demand, once more, for a "law-abiding miracle"; but it is a demand which we find already granted. Just such a factor of modification in the life of sense, intervening without suspending the laws of sensation and in a way that is according to laws of its own, we find to exist in the activity of *thought*.

Thought observes sensations and their conditions, remembers them, and anticipates future possibilities, probabilities and certainties. Such thought leads to knowledge

of the conditions of pain, and when combined with consideration of what pain, on the one hand, is valuable for guidance or discipline, and what pain, on the other hand, is unnecessary, this knowledge tends to lessen the amount of needless suffering. By taking thought man can anticipate and avoid unnecessary and disagreeable experiences. For example, he can learn to avoid the pains that follow excess in the pursuit of pleasure. By " taking pains " enough to study the causes of undesirable effects, he has been able, on behalf of others as well as for himself, to provide against very much greater future pains. The discovery of anæsthetics is simply a conspicuous example of the law-abiding intervention of thought in the processes of sensation.

But thinking is a means of intervening, not only to prevent pain and modify other sense-experiences for the better; it can work against physical disasters directly. Especially in the overcoming of disease, scientific investigation has accomplished wonderful results, and it is probably not too much to say that science has made it possible for twice as many people to live twice as long as formerly. And science, of course, is not the whole of thought, but only its more methodical development.

But while thought is a most important means of intervening for the prevention of needless suffering and for the more effective safeguarding of life and property, it must be admitted that it is not always as successful as could be wished. In fact, there is evil in the realm of thought, intellectual evil in the form of ignorance and positive error, and this further complicates our original problem. Sometimes error as to the ends to be pursued, or as to the means to be employed, or mere ignorance and vacuity of mind may cause an immense amount of unnecessary suffering and disaster to life and objects of

value. Not only is there often a failure, through ignorance, to remedy remediable evils; there is often the imposition of additional suffering and destruction of life as the direct result of erroneous ideas. Religious persecution is a case in point.

But not only are ignorance and error, as results of inadequate thought, themselves evils and the occasion of further evils in the way of suffering and disaster. Exact, scientific thinking may serve to make injurious processes all the more potent and disastrous. Science serves to make crime more skilful and to make war so destructive as to threaten the future existence of the race.

Would it not seem desirable, then, that there should be some intervention in the life of thought, such as might direct it into beneficent channels, making information more accurate and complete, and the whole process of thought more effective for good? No doubt such intervention would be desirable, provided it did not unduly interfere with the dependable order of the universe in the realm of the physical, or in the life of sensation or thought, but took place only under definite conditions and within narrow and discoverable limits.

This third call for normal "miracle" has also been anticipated in the constitution of human nature. In the human will, or capacity for voluntary attention, we find a way of intervening for the direction and concentration of thought, so that ignorance and error may in the normal and dependable way be progressively overcome, and the whole thought process directed towards eliminating needless suffering and disaster and realizing in a more positive way the truest human ideals.

This miracle of human free will carries with it immense possibilities of making the world a better place for man to live in. Our doctrine that the world in its general

constitution is the best possible kind of world does not mean that it is as good a world as it ever can be. While remaining a world of physical law, and one in which there occur the orderly miracles of sensation and thought, our world may be made, by virtue of human free agency, a much better world than it is or ever has been. If all human wills were as good and efficient as, by virtue of their freedom, they might be, thought would become so much more effective for good, that the life of sense would be so unified for the better, and physical evils so guarded against, as ultimately to make the conditions of life on the earth in most respects almost ideal. Apart from the final inevitableness of physical death—a fact which involves problems which we must presently consider—it may be said that, if only the wills of men were as well-disposed as they might be, there would be little or nothing to regret, ultimately, in such injurious accidents and biologically unnecessary sufferings as might still persist through man's not yet having learned how to prevent them. It would be better that man should have the training in mind and character involved in finding out how to combat disease and other causes of pain and disaster than that by some arbitrary and purely magical miracle these evils should be removed without any human effort, and so without any training of the human intellect or will. Moreover, the possibility of training in fortitude involved in the facing of unavoidable danger, and in the endurance of unpreventable pain, would not be anything to be regretted. Neither would it be desirable that the race should be without any such training in social sympathy and helpfulness as are made possible by the fact of actual or threatened suffering and loss. Nor, finally, would it be well for humanity to be without the socially unifying spectacle of individuals, voluntarily and for the good of

others, undertaking courses of action which necessarily involve great suffering for themselves.

With the exception of the problem involved in the inevitable death of the individual, our general problem of evil might now be regarded as solved, if this *free* will of man, to which we have referred, were always at the same time a *good* will. But the very fact of free will, which is the necessary condition of good choices, and consequently of the development of moral character and a good will, also makes evil choices possible, with their many unfortunate consequences, including the development of immoral character and an evil will. Moreover, this evil will tends to make evil choice habitual, and so to aggravate its own evil condition.

Here we are confronted with the problem of the origin of moral evil. How comes it that beings that are free to choose between good and evil should sometimes choose evil, not simply through ignorance, but even against their best moral judgment? It is not necessary to push the problem further back by referring to a superhuman tempter. The explanation is psychological, physiological, sociological. Right conduct is action which is right both inwardly and outwardly. It is conscientiously and intelligently directed toward the true well-being of all concerned. Such action is not always the easiest to choose and carry through. Instinct, habit, mental inertia and social influence may be against it, even when the true ideal is seen and approved. And so it comes about that man is often guilty of choices which bring into existence a new kind of evil, and that the worst of all, viz. moral evil, or sin. Moreover, moral evil is very potent in increasing the other kinds of evil to which we have referred, viz. needless injury and disaster to life and its values, needless suffering, and needless ignorance and error. Through

man's inhumanity to man, the world is far from being the best possible world. Universal and permanent good will in man would make heaven on earth, but the evil human will has gone far—in war, for instance—toward making hell on earth.

And yet what is desirable is not the taking away of human freedom of choice and action. Other things being equal, a world of human free agency is the best possible kind of world. Without it moral personality would be impossible. Man would be a mere mechanical puppet, some of whose actions were mysteriously accompanied by processes of completely predetermined sensation and thought. But a world of moral freedom is one in which it is possible for man to learn the right way of life, if not through the preferred way of anticipating possible evil and avoiding it, then through the bitter consequences of thoughtless or wilful wrong-doing. The case, then, is similar to that of intellectual evil. There is danger in free thought and investigation, lest one fall into error, with its unfortunate consequences. There is danger, similarly, in free choice and action, lest one fall into sin and its many consequent evils. But it is better to think than not to be able to think, and better to choose than not to be able to choose. The possibility of moral personality and of continual progress towards an ever-developing moral ideal is without doubt worth the risk of individual choices of moral evil.

But in view of the seriousness of moral evil and its consequences, and considering the costliness and uncertain efficacy of learning to do right through experiencing the painful consequences of doing wrong, it seems highly desirable that there should be yet another way of intervening, this time in the life of the human will, to guard against this peculiarly serious form of evil, viz. human

sin. But it is desirable also that this intervention should occur without destroying the orderliness of nature or of the life of sense and thought, and without interfering with the freedom of human choice and action. This again may seem a great deal to ask, but it is not too much. Provision has been made for just this sort of normal intervention in the miracle of moral salvation through the right sort of religious dependence. This experience of salvation from sin through the right adjustment of the life to God is not forced upon anyone ; human freedom is not violated, and happily so, for there could be no moral salvation if it were. But if all individuals were to fulfil as fully as possible the religious conditions of salvation from sin, the world we live in would come to seem to us so nearly the best possible world, that it would be easy to believe it to be the best possible *kind* of world for the first stages of man's development. If, then, the world is not what it would be if man were to make as full use as he might of the source of moral renewal in religious experience at its best, the fault is his own. The world as a world of human freedom, even in the matter of choosing or rejecting moral salvation, is a better kind of world than one of any other imaginable sort would be, whether it were a world in which developing creatures could never need salvation, because they were not free and so could not sin, or a world in which there was sin but no provision for salvation, or a world in which an external " salvation," so called, was forced upon the individual without his choice or against his will, and so at the expense of his moral personality.

But there is still another element of the problem of evil which would remain to exercise our minds, no matter how fully moral evil were overcome through educative discipline and religious dependence. There is the problem

involved in the universal and inevitable fact of physical death. However the good will with the aid of scientific thought may guard man against violent and premature death, the limit of the power to live is nevertheless soon reached. Every human individual, however valuable he may be as a means of human betterment or as an end in himself, must ultimately part with his material body and disappear from the earthly life of the race.

Now so far as the well-being of the human race on earth is concerned, it is no doubt better that all must ultimately die than that there should be no such thing as bodily death. If the latter were the case, the earth would soon be full of old people, there would be no room for new generations, and the resulting racial stagnation may be left to the imagination to depict. If only it were possible to be assured that all the essential values of individual personality were somehow conserved, in spite of the death of the body, it would be possible to maintain that even a world in which physical death is universally inevitable is still the best possible kind of world in which to have the human individual pass the first stage of his development.

But is it possible to find a reasonable basis for believing that the death of the body does not mean the end of those values that are bound up inseparably with personal existence? What is called for is one more normal and universally dependable miracle, viz. the miracle of personal immortality. Racial immortality, so called, is not sufficient. In fact, if there is no individual immortality, there can be no immortality of the race. Science holds out the certain prospect of a time when this planet will have become too cold for the support of any form of physical life. The only possible guarantee of racial immortality is necessarily bound up with the immortality of the individual.

The question of a future life is not a trivial one. Especially in these days of world-warfare, with the unprecedented slaughter of promising young lives, the demand of the human heart for this miracle of a life after death becomes insistent and wellnigh universal. The soldier is not indifferent to the question. He wants to be able to believe that when he gives his life for the cause he believes in, that sacrifice will not mean the end of his personal existence. And there is probably no place on earth where the flame of the immortal hope burns brighter than on the blood-soaked fields of Europe. Spontaneously the feeling arises, as one views the broken and mangled bodies of the dead and the dying, and the rows upon rows of wooden crosses that mark the graves of the heroic dead, " Of course there must be a life beyond ; this surely cannot be the end of all." Said a young Canadian soldier of his friend who had just been killed by a German shell : " He'll carry on ! It would take more than that to stop him ! "

There are some who affect a superior air and declare all desire for immortality a mark of egotism and petty selfishness. It may be granted at once that the desire of an egotistical and thoroughly selfish person for a future life would very probably be an egotistical and selfish desire. But when the medical missionary who has been giving his life in arduous and unselfish service to the fishermen of Labrador has this to say : " I am very much in love with life. I want all I can get of it. And if there is any more to be had after this life is over, I want that too," the desire can not be dismissed as an expression of petty selfishness. It all depends upon what a future life is wanted for, and what use would be made of the further opportunity for action, if the desire for it were granted. On the understanding that a future life would

mean a further chance to express the good will and realize the moral ideal, it must be evident that no one could morally vote against the immortality of any good will, his own or that of anyone else. The value of a good will, as means to other ends and as an end in itself, is, especially if given unending opportunity for expression and development, immeasurably great, and therefore its continued existence is absolutely imperative, if at all possible. Indeed, practically the same thing may be said of any will concerning which there is good reason to hope that it will become a good will. No person, therefore, human or divine, can be wise and good, and not be for the immortality of all wills that are actually or even potentially good.

But is it believable that the human mind and will and whole spiritual personality will outlast the physical life? Are not all the phenomena of human consciousness necessarily dependent upon certain conditions of the brain? How then can consciousness continue after the disintegration of the body? In reply to this it may be said that it is not necessary to regard mind as dependent for its existence upon the brain. On the contrary, it is quite as permissible to view the brain as the developing instrument of the developing mind, and an instrument which has as its special function the bringing of the mind into such relations with a particular material environment as will enable it to learn therefrom, express itself therein, and communicate with other "embodied" minds similarly related to the same environment. And there is strong support for this view in certain special considerations, some of which may be briefly mentioned. For example, if we accept as valid the normal human consciousness of moral responsibility, we must hold that, within whatever limits, man is a free agent; for if he were not free at all,

he would not be morally responsible. But if he is free, this must mean that his spiritual self is an originating and even creative factor in certain changes which take place, first of all in the brain, and ultimately, through the nerves and muscles, in the external world. If, then, mind is independent enough to create changes in the brain, is it unreasonable to suppose it may be independent enough to survive the dissolution of the brain? Some would appeal to the alleged phenomena of spirit-communication as verifying the hypothesis of a future life. Others, however, maintain that the hypothesis of telepathy is sufficient to account for the facts, without any appeal to the theory of communication from discarnate minds. But telepathy itself would mean such a view of mind as would make it seem not unreasonable to suppose that it might very well be able to persist without the brain as its instrument.

But if we would go beyond these statements (to the effect that a future life is morally and socially imperative and theoretically possible), we must rest our assertions upon a religious basis. In the experience of inner preparedness for anything that one may have to face, through dependence upon a power great enough and good enough for our imperative religious needs, there are included on the one hand an assurance that such a power exists, and on the other hand a sense of readiness to meet even physical death itself without the prospect of any absolute and irreparable loss. These two assurances are bound up with each other. In proportion as we are sure of a God who is sufficient for our imperative religious needs, we can be sure that He will not suffer the good will, or the will that is on the way to becoming good, to lapse into non-existence. "I know God," says the religious expert, "and I know He will not let me die."

We have thus the indicated solution of the religious problem of evil, the problem as to how the fact of evil in the world is compatible with the sufficient greatness and goodness of God. It may be well to summarize briefly the main course of our discussion. A physical world of absolutely dependable law and order is a better basis for the development of physical life than any alternative that can be suggested. But the working out of the natural processes in such a world tends to prove disastrous at times to physical life and to objects having value for life. A means of guarding against such disasters without violating physical law is to be found in the facts of sensation, including pain. Sensation itself occurs according to law, and consequently under certain circumstances there tend to be instances of needless pain. A means of guarding against such needless pain, and also against disaster to life, is to be found in thought. The processes of thought occur according to psychical law, and consequently under certain circumstances there tends to be erroneous thought. A means of guarding against error is to be found in the capacity of directing attention, within necessary limits and yet in a free and creative way. This free agency, however, while indispensable for the development of moral personality, also necessarily involves the possibility of moral evil, which when it becomes actual, carries with it a train of error, needless suffering and disaster or injury to life and objects of value. A means of guarding effectively against moral evil is to be found in the religious experience of moral salvation, an experience which occurs without violation of the laws of nature or of mind, and without violating the free agency of man. But in spite of these normal miracles of sensation, thought, free will, and the religious experience of moral salvation, there remains the inevitable fact of physical death. The

complete solution of the problem of evil thus requires the postulate of the further miracle of the soul's survival of bodily death—a miracle assurance of which may be found in a type of religious experience which is universally valid and accessible to all who are willing to fulfil the necessary conditions. These are the miracles we can be assured of, and they are the only ones we need to be assured of to be able to maintain that however far, through man's misuse of freedom, the world may fall short of being, as yet, the best possible world, it is nevertheless the best possible kind of world to be the scene of the first stages of man's development. And through man's co-operation with God, undertaken in dependence upon God, this best possible kind of world may be brought more and more into conformity with the ideal of the best possible world.

IV

GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL

IN order to deal at all completely with the problem of the relation of God to evil, we have had to anticipate to some extent our discussion of the relation of God to the individual. We have had to refer to the religious experience of moral salvation and to the religious assurance of personal immortality, both of which are affairs of God and individual men. But there are some further questions with reference to the mutual relations of God and men to which the war has given new interest as topics of thought and discussion.

One of these problems has to do with the relation of God to the protection of the soldier in the midst of the dangers that surround him. There are some false notions about this which need correcting. Soldiers who have but recently arrived at the front are likely to think that the saying of their prayers will have a sort of magical efficacy for the saving of their lives. " I said my prayers and I came out all right," said a wounded soldier to his chaplain, meaning by " coming out all right " that he had not been killed. But of those who said prayers for their own protection, or of those for whom friends said prayers for protection, was there never one killed?

We have no desire to discount unduly the value which such trench-religion undoubtedly has. Being brought

face to face with the prospect of a cruel and untimely death tends, naturally enough, to bring about a serious frame of mind, which may even mean a spiritual crisis in the history of the individual. At any rate, it is nothing but normal that a man should have something of the feeling of absolute dependence, and should begin to have a new realization of his need of God.

But much the same thing may be said of trench-religion as is notoriously true of "death-bed repentance." It sometimes has a discernibly permanent effect; but, speaking generally, it tends to disappear when the danger is over. It is a well-known fact that when troops are expecting, in the course of a few hours, to go into action, it is not a difficult thing to get them, almost to a man, to partake of the sacraments of the Church. But the writer can say from his own observation in a camp made up of veterans who had been for some months—in hospital, convalescent home, and command depot—away from the front lines, that the number of men remaining for the communion service after "Church parade" was commonly not more than from two to five per cent. of the total number present. And this characteristically frank confession was made by an officer: "When I was in the trenches, I prayed like a good one; but a week later, when I was back in billets, I didn't care a damn for religion."

The trouble with ordinary trench-religion is that to a considerable degree it is the expression of superstitious and magical notions as to the efficacy of religion. It is too much akin to the widespread revival of fetichism, which is one of the curious phenomena of the war. Unless the turning to God in the trenches is an expression of whole-hearted aspiration after a higher and better life, this overt religion of the soldier is very far from being

as fine a thing, or as true a test of manhood, as the readiness to lay down one's life for friends and country and the future good of the world, whether this loyalty to a cause be thought of as religion or not.

As a matter of fact the soldier, after some experience at the front, tends to lose faith in his half-instinctive prayers for protection and in the practices of magical religion, and to adopt the now well-known fatalism of the trenches. Realizing how little any one at " the real front " can do, through prayer or in any other way, to guarantee his immunity from death, he finds comfort in the thought that the time and manner of his death are settled beforehand. And so, with the thought, " What's the use of worrying ? " he learns to do his daily duty with a fine scorn of the constant menace of death.

This fatalism should not be regarded as the mark of a total lapse from religion, even when it appears, as it so often does, as a substitute for the half-instinctive, half-superstitious saying of prayers as a protection against death. In truth, it is often the soldier's way, crude and inadequate though it may be, of expressing his self-commitment to an overruling providence. It may even be the soldier's " camouflage " for a faith that might have been expressed in the familiar words, " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." In any case, there are many—and I have found chaplains among them—who feel that it is the only thing that makes life tolerable at the front.

And yet this fatalistic philosophy of the trenches is open to serious criticism. It may often prove beneficial, as compared with entire lack of faith or some more superstitious belief. But it often proves injurious, as officers and men who have been at the front can testify, leading to carelessness and the taking of unnecessary risks from which nothing can be gained. As a doctrine it contains

some truth, but it is also partly false, and the real truth would be much better. Indeed, no soldier has complete confidence in this fatalistic principle; there are always limits beyond which he declines to apply it. The real truth is that it matters little *when* one dies, as compared with *how* one dies. It is the truth that through self-surrender to God and dependence upon Him one can become inwardly or spiritually prepared for whatever duty he may have to do and whatever danger he may be called upon to face.

This religion, superior to fatalism, containing its truth and practical value and avoiding its error and possible harm, is well expressed in the following lines, written by a young Canadian soldier [1] before going into action in the great battle of the Somme in 1916:—

O God of Battles, now that time has come
Which in the pregnant months in camp has been
The goal of everything, my hope, my fear,
The peril of the thing as yet unseen:

That fear and wounds and death may pass me by,
Is not the boon, O Lord, for which I pray;
For having put the rim within my lips,
I do not ask to put the cup away.

But grant the heart that Thou hast given me
May in the hour of peril never fail,
And that my will to serve and do my part
May ever o'er my will to live prevail.

Thou knowest, Lord, my soul doth not fear death,
Although my body craves to live its span;
Help me to grapple with my body's fear,
And grant, O Lord, that I may play the man.

It is not immunity from death, or from the even more

[1] Ernest Garside Black.

dreaded mutilation, that the soldier should seek to be assured of, when he commits himself to God and places his trust in Him. What he may reasonably and rightly seek are these three things : resolution, such as will enable him to meet triumphantly the temptations to evil that will assail his moral character ; a steadfast devotion to duty, such as will keep him faithful to the end ; and finally assurance that, if he should be called upon to give his life for the cause of justice and liberty, the death of the body will not mean the end of his existence as a conscious personality. These are the benefits which the soldier is warranted, by reason and experience, in seeking in the ways of religion.

One of the most fundamental problems of the relation of God to the individual, as raised anew by the war, is the question of immortality ; but this we have already discussed in connection with the problem of evil. Our conclusion was that assurance of a future life is bound up with the assurance of the existence of God as a power great enough and good enough for our religious needs. As we have seen, this assurance of the reality of God is to be gained in the experience of moral salvation, i.e. of inner preparedness, through religious dependence, for whatever one may be called upon to face.

But the bare fact of a future life is not all we want to know. What ought we to believe about the future destiny of the soldier who has been killed in battle ? One of the doctrines of the day is to the effect that the soldier's self-sacrifice for the cause of righteousness and humanity makes atonement for the sins of his life, so that we may be assured of his entrance immediately at death into the perfect peace and bliss of heavenly life. Now it is somewhat difficult to appraise correctly such a doctrine, for the reason that some of its presuppositions are open

to criticism. It assumes that the relation between God and the individual is primarily one of government, law, crime, legal punishment and judicial pardon, rather than one of a more direct personal sort. The only way for the sinner to be saved, according to the older notion, was through a conscious and definite acceptance of the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, as expiating the guilt of human sin by bearing its legal penalty as a substitute for sinful man, and thus propitiating an offended and wrathful God. Apart from explicit belief in the death of Christ as the sufficient substitute for one's own everlasting punishment, there was no salvation, it was maintained, from the inconceivable torment to be suffered forever in hell.

Now of course the idea, so popular at present, of the soldier's expiation of the sins of a lifetime through the " supreme sacrifice " for a worthy cause is in *some* respects a vast improvement upon this traditional doctrine. Its idea of God and especially its interpretation of divine justice are immeasurably more in agreement with the truly Christian view of God's holy love as revealed in the spirit of the historic Jesus and in supreme sacrifice on behalf of the well-being of humanity.[1] Moreover, it is

[1] The *traditional* Christian doctrine of the Atonement is really more akin to the *legalistic* Old Testament doctrine of sacrifices—against which the greatest of the Old Testament prophets protested with great vehemence—than it is to the characteristic idea of New Testament Christianity. According to the Old Testament doctrine, for the establishing of reconciliation and peace with God, man, the sinner, takes the first step and brings a gift to God, or makes an innocent victim suffer instead of himself, imagining that in view of this performance God will be made propitious and grant him the pardon of his transgression. In the orthodox Christian doctrine, the sinner is instructed to substitute the innocent Christ for the animal victim; in other respects the conception is the same. " God, the Father " (in spite of this designation) is regarded as the *un*propitious and arbitrary Sovereign,

true that there *is* something akin to the death of Christ in the heroic self-surrender of the soldier, even unto death, for a cause which he has the right to believe in as the cause not only of his country, but of all future generations of humanity as well.

Let it be understood that the spiritual value of the soldier's sacrificial devotion to home and country and to the ideals of justice and liberty is fully and gladly acknowledged. This has been suggested already, and will appear more fully presently, in connection with our more constructive statement on the religion of the soldier. But before making any sweeping statements as to the salvation, through self-sacrifice, of the soldiers who have died, it may be well to ask how far those other soldiers may be said to have experienced salvation who are still numbered among the survivors of encounters in which they, equally

whose wrath against the sinner can be removed only by the punishment of *some* victim, though it need not be the actual transgressor. But not only would such a transaction be *unethical* for both God and man, whether the victim were a mere animal or a Christ; it only serves to make it *irrational* as well, when it is maintained that there is a transfer of guilt from the sinner to the victim, and of righteousness from the victim to the sinner. Any such notion is magical and superstitious; there can be no guilt but the guilt which is inseparable from a sinful will, so long as it remains sinful; and there can be no righteousness, save that which is inseparable from the morally good will. The characteristically Christian or New Testament notion of the reconciliation of God and man represents God, the one sinned against, as taking the first step to bring about reconciliation; it is He who furnishes whatever "propitiatory offering" may be supposed to be necessary (see Rom. iii. 25 in the Greek original); it is man who is to be changed and "reconciled" (see 2 Cor. v. 20); God has been *propitious* all along, like the father of the prodigal; all that is needed is the turning of man's will from the ways of sin, or his turning to God that he may be the more effectively turned from sin; and it is only in so far as it induces this change in man that the unselfish life or the undeserved and "sacrificial" death of the Man of Nazareth can be regarded as having any truly saving function.

with the fallen, braved the prospect of death on behalf of a just and sacred cause. After the war it will be discovered with regard to a good many of these brave lads, not only that they are still very far from being conventional saints—that will not be greatly to their discredit!—but that while in some respects they are stronger and finer men, in some other respects their characters have suffered deterioration. And while many, perhaps most of them, will have gained a new respect for the things that count for most in religion, it will not be possible to say that they have all been brought into a state of reconciliation with God by their experience in the trenches.

What ought to be said of the soldiers who meet death on the field of honor is this, that they will begin the future life with the characters with which they ended this first stage of their existence, but that the heroic doing of their duty, even unto death, will necessarily mean a long forward step in the development of strength and nobility of character. And in any case, from the truly Christian point of view, they are now, as always, the objects of the divine love and care.

One of the most marked of the war's effects upon religious practice is to be seen in the widespread revival among Protestants of the saying of prayers for the dead. It is a logical development from modern Christian conceptions of God and of the future life. If God is unchangeably the God of justice and love, and if man's future life is one of continued conscious activity and development, why should it not be as right and reasonable to express to God one's "soul's sincere desire" for the spiritual well-being of the departed as it is to pray for those who have not yet crossed "the great divide"?

There is this difference, however, between prayer for the dead and prayer for the living. In prayer for the

living our continued contact with them acts as a check upon exaggerated notions as to the effects of our prayer. The tendency piously to assume that the mere saying of prayers on our part can produce any magical change in their lives is discouraged by what we can learn of their present condition. But in prayer for the dead this check upon an over-exuberant faith—or credulity—does not exist. There is no way of disproving that the request has been granted, and many will be persuaded that it would be impious to doubt it. There would thus be a tendency toward the thought that the making of one's own life right might very well be postponed until after death, and that there need be no very great concern for the character or spiritual condition of others during the present life. The history of prayer for the dead, especially as recognized and encouraged by the Church, is not entirely reassuring.

What seems to be needed is a revision of current notions with reference to the whole matter of intercessory prayer. Prayer with direct reference to the spiritual welfare of others may very well be the highest and most unselfish kind of prayer ; but there is reason to fear that the ideas of many Christians concerning intercessory prayer are not only unverified but both unreasonable and unchristian. The saying of prayers for others, if interpreted in a certain way, may even do more harm than good. It is " vain repetition," comparable to magical incantation. Not long ago the writer heard a group of religious leaders discussing the introduction of " efficiency methods " into their intercessory prayer. The idea was to group together various objects on their prayer-lists, and pray for them together for the saving of time ! It is surely not undue scepticism to be doubtful as to the value of such mechanical intercession. Moreover, prayer with reference to the spiritual

well-being of others must not be of the sort that is so easily made a substitute for doing one's duty to those others directly. It must not be asking God to do, without any effort on our part, what the divine Spirit, by leading us to be interested in them, is seeking to accomplish through *our* instrumentality. Rather must effectual intercessory prayer be—in the main, at least—a coming into dynamic relations with God, in order to be prepared to work effectively for the well-being of those in whom we are interested.

The solution of the problem as to the future of the soldier killed in action is to be found, then, neither in the idea of the expiation of the sins of a lifetime by the heroic self-sacrifice of one's life for a noble cause, nor in the practice of offering prayers on behalf of the dead. Rather is it to be found in remembering that these brave lads in the trenches are all of them well-beloved sons of God. When one has watched the soldiers marching up to the trenches, stern and thoughtful, looking straight ahead through the gathering night to the unknown that awaits them; when one has seen them with the guns and on the fire-step; when one has seen them returning from the trenches, as the writer saw them by the thousand in the great battle of the Somme, for example, some of them from two days' fighting, in which a trench had been captured from the enemy, consolidated and held against heavy shell fire and three counter-attacks; when one has looked upon the sublime spectacle of these rain-soaked, mud-beplastered men from the field of battle, haggard and ready to drop from exhaustion, but ready to help one another, considerate, grateful for the least word or act of kindness, uncomplaining and cheery, with an air of spiritual content about them; or when one has seen the freshly wounded in the dressing stations, bearing

their pain and their ghastly mutilations with quiet fortitude, and when one reflects that it is the chastisement of our peace that has been laid upon them, and that with their stripes we are healed, one can not escape the conviction that out of the world's groaning and travailing in pain there has come a revealing of the sons of God. If these gallant soldier-lads are not sons of God, there are no sons of God among us. There is much that is far from perfect in them, no doubt; they are sinful sons of men, and many of them will have to suffer the bitter consequences of their sins. They need the regenerating power of God, like the rest of us; they need to become consciously, and by their own free decision, sons of God in a fuller and more intimate sense of the term. But after one has come to know them as they are, at their best and at their worst, one does not wonder any more that God should love sinners. In spite of everything they are already, in a very real sense of the word, God's sons; and His likeness can be seen in their faces, marred with the grime and blood of battle for a just and holy cause.

In the words of the Master there is a parable of two sons, both of whom were bidden by their father to go and work in his vineyard. One of them replied, "I go, sir," but he went not. The other said, "I will not," but he afterwards repented and went. Performance without profession *versus* profession without performance. After all it is performance that counts. There are some who, in those far-off days before the war, professed to be in a special relation of sonship to God, and promised to be obedient to His will. And then the time of testing came, and they "went not." But these others, many of them, in those bygone days never ventured much in the way of profession or promise. But when the time for devoting their lives to the sacred Cause arrived, they responded

to the call and "went." Of the two sorts of "sons," which were the ones who *did* the will of their Father?

The fact is, there are two kinds of religion. Both sorts are desirable. Some people have very little of either kind; some have one sort, and some have the other. These two varieties of religion are, first, devotion to the divine Ideal, that is, to an ideal of such absolute value that it is worth living for, and may even prove, on occasion, worth dying for; and second, dependence upon the divine Being, or Power, that is, upon the superhuman Reality which man has a right to regard as the ultimate objective Factor in his experience, That upon which he is absolutely dependent. Devotion to the divine Ideal we may call *fundamental religion*, and dependence upon the divine Being with reference to some desired experience, *experimental religion*. Now there may be a good many soldiers who have very little experimental religion, or whose experimental religion is of a rather low and superstitious order; but on the other hand, many of these same soldiers, in the fidelity of their devotion to duty and to the eternally valid human ideals that the allied soldier's duty represents, furnish a most inspiring illustration of fundamental religion. And if the real God be the God of Christian faith, He is better satisfied with such devotion to the Ideal, even though it be unaccompanied by conscious dependence upon Himself, than He would be with mere dependence upon Himself, without devotion to the true Ideal, which is the goal of His will.

The soldiers who have died for international justice and the future well-being of humanity, and so for divine ideals, or the will of God, will presumably stand higher in the judgment of the God of righteousness and love than many others who may have seemed to us more religious, but who shirked their duty in the supreme

crisis. What is meant is not that the blood of the final heroic act of self-sacrifice washes out the stains of the sins of a lifetime. The divine judgment, being true judgment, always is and will be judgment according to what the man really is, judgment according to character. The divine Grace never interferes with the correctness of the divine verdict. And while the slain soldier's final heroic service and sacrifice will mean much for his character, they will not mean everything. But these brave souls will be judged by the God whose judgments are true and righteous altogether, by the God who hates hypocrisy and cowardice, and who loves sincerity, loyalty, and courage. No doubt there ought to be, and there will still need to be, in the future life, educative discipline. The evil consequences of wrong-doing in the earthly life will still be felt, but the experience of these evil consequences will be purgatorial, cleansing the mind and will from sin, if they are taken in the same spirit of fortitude and devotion to a true ideal that have characterized the good soldier. And in any case, the immortal spirits of our soldier dead are in the keeping of the God, great enough and good enough for all their needs, whose imperfect but beloved sons they are.

And what of the future of the soldiers who will be with us again after the war is over? It would be a mistake to suppose that they will be inevitably better or that they will be inevitably worse as a result of their experiences. Some of them will be the better and some of them the worse for their experiences, and many of them will be both better and worse. But this much is certain: no man who goes to war for a righteous cause from a sense of duty *need* suffer in character as a result of his life as a soldier. The divine Power is sufficient for the needs of the human spirit under all circumstances. Many

a soldier has proved the sufficiency of God to enable him, in the discharge of his duty, to endure unimagined miseries with fortitude and to look death in the face undaunted. But many a soldier needs to learn the more prosaic lesson that he has quite as much need of God to enable him to meet with equal preparedness of spirit the dangers that beset him in the temptations of his well-earned period of "leave." Here, too, the power of God is sufficient for the needs of man, but its exercise is conditioned upon self-surrender to the divine Ideal as well as dependence upon the divine Reality. There is no soldier in our armies but may, if he will fulfil the conditions, return to his friends, if he survives the war, strengthened and ennobled in character by the discipline of his experiences. This is true because there is a power of the divine indwelling Spirit sufficient for every imperative religious need of man.

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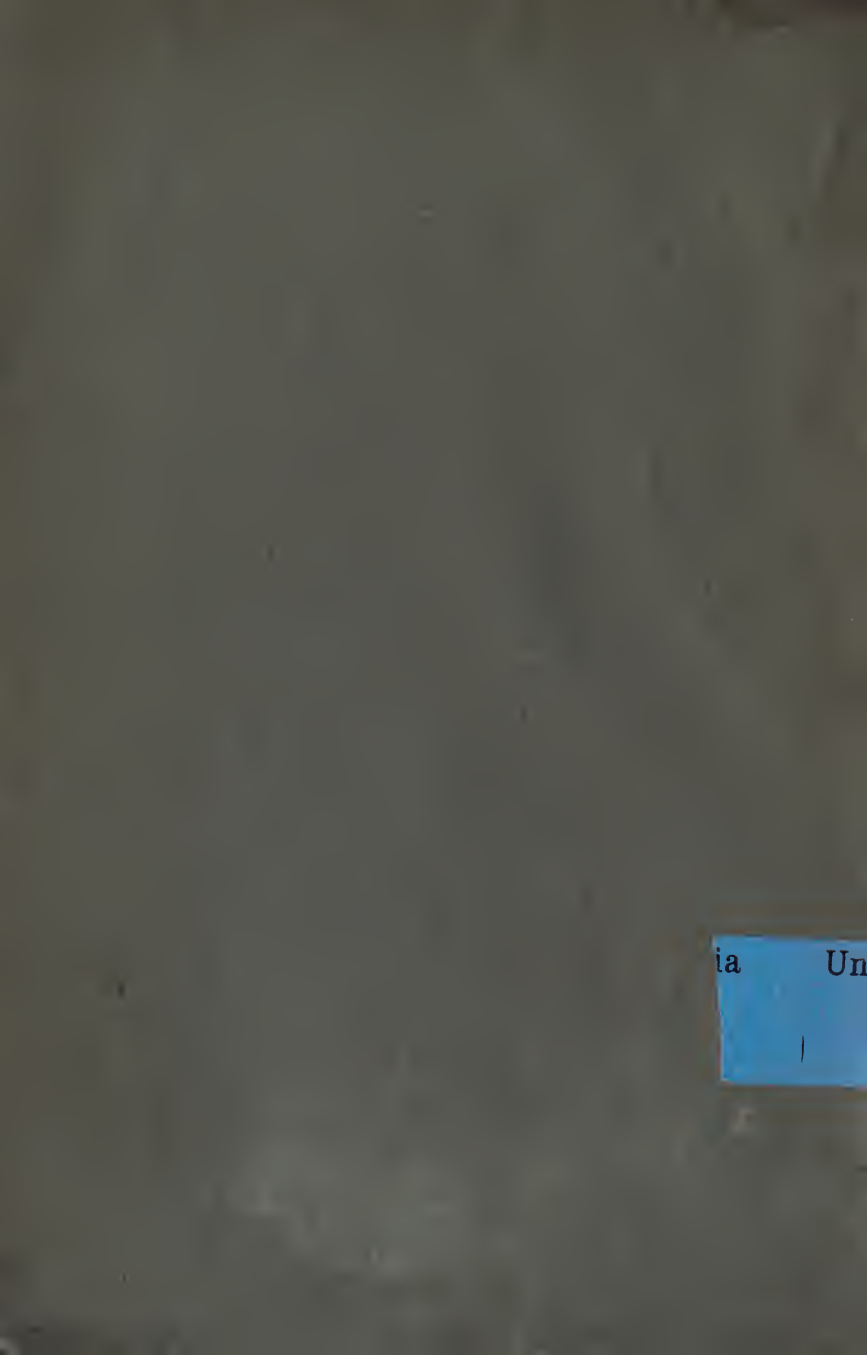
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